


GA Annual Conference & Exhibition 2010

Research Papers

Colour Key:

 Research Papers

Session Information

A research paper session is 20 minutes long, with 5 minutes for specific questions. Papers with a similar theme have been batched together into groups of two or three. Although the research paper sessions are batched, there is no requirement to stay for the whole group, and you are free to attend single sessions as you wish. At the end of a group of research papers there will be 20-30 minutes available for group discussion.

FRIDAY 9 APRIL

11.30-11.50 - Patterns of entry for GCSE geography 2000-2007 **Research Paper - KS3-4**

Paul Weeden, Secretary, GA Assessment & Examinations Working Group

Pupils in England, at age 14, have the opportunity to make choices about the subjects they will study for the next two years. These choices are influenced by many different factors such as national and local policy, school location, school pupil intake, attainment, parents and peers. This paper looks at the geographical patterns of entry for GCSE Geography at local authority and school level over the period 2000-2007. While nationally numbers have declined, there is a large variation in entries both between and within Local Authorities (LAs). The factors outlined above are important in individual school contexts but it has also emerged that departments and teachers play a significant role in encouraging students to study the subject.

12.00-12.20 - Student teachers' experiences of and attitudes to history, geography and science

Research Paper - P16

Dr Susan Pike, Lecturer in Geography Education, St. Patrick's College, Dublin

This paper presents the results of a longitudinal study of Bachelor of Education students between 2004 and 2008 carried out by members of the Irish Association for Social, Scientific and Environmental Education (IASSEE). IASSEE provides a forum for initial teacher educators in Northern Ireland (NI) and the Republic of Ireland (RoI) to share their ideas in history, geography and science education. Amongst the aims of the Association is the improvement of the teaching of history, geography and science education in initial teacher education (ITE).

The research findings were obtained via two questionnaires that were administered to BEd students at the beginning of their first year and at the end of the final year of their degree courses. A total of 32 focus group interviews were also conducted with students at the mid-point of their courses. The study found that students entering ITE had a range of experiences of geography at school. From these experiences they had developed ideas of what made a good teacher of geography. During their time in ITE students experienced a broadly positive experience of geography both in college and on school placements. For some students these experiences enhanced their already positive attitudes to geography, for others the experiences helped improve their attitudes towards geography. However, the results reveal a number of issues relating to the development of student teachers as teachers of geography. In relation to college courses there was evidence of issues over the breadth of short geography education courses, especially in relation to the limited opportunities for developing students' content knowledge. Conflicts between college and school expectations of student teachers' were also evident. These issues played out in different ways for students from NI and the RoI, with students from NI generally concerned about content knowledge and students from the RoI more concerned about pedagogical knowledge.

The results of the survey suggest that geography education courses have a very positive impact on student teachers' experiences of teaching and learning geography, however there remain issues in ITE in geography education.

12.20-12.50 – Group Discussion and Q&A

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13.50-14.10 - Reading and writing place: a role for geography education?

Research Paper - All KS

Eleanor Rawling, Member, Geography Editorial Board

This research draws on recent moves in cultural geography to re-emphasise personal engagement with the world around us and to consider the implications of this for geographical education. As Wylie (2004) explains, rather than study landscape and place as if we are detached spectators, there is value in considering 'the interconnectedness of self, body, knowledge and place'. This focus on 'being in' and 'engaging with' the world results in a new interest in activities like walking, running, gardening, painting, filming, photography and writing (i.e. in 'the sources of landscape knowledge and meaning') and causes us to revalue resources such as literature, poetry, painting, film and biographical writing. This focus on active 'being in the world' has relevance for the education of young people. The presentation will suggest how geography educators might engage with these debates to develop a geographical approach to 'reading and writing place' as a key element of a future geography education.

14.20-14.40 - Unsettling settlement

Research Paper - KS3-P16

Richard Bustin, Geography Teacher, Bancroft's School, Woodford Green

This classroom based action-research addresses the question of what constitutes a modern, dynamic and relevant geography curriculum. It develops a teaching sequence which attempts to bring ideas from university geography into the secondary classroom. It uses the students' own experiences of urban living as a starting point to develop thoughts around 'Thirdspace' (Soja 1996), which looks at the interaction of people and the environment in which they live. This incorporates 'Firstspace' (the layout of the building) with the 'Secondspace' (the representational space) to create the 'Thirdspace' or 'lived experience'. The Thirdspace of those 'out of place' in the urban environment is the focus of a sequence of lessons which aims to provide an intriguing and insightful sequence of study of urban place.

The action-research involved analysing students' work as well as running focus groups with selected students to refine the teaching unit. It also engages critically with curriculum ideology, questions what should or should not form the contemporary geography curriculum and assesses the extent to which Thirdspace could play a role, particularly in light of declining student numbers and the increasing importance of teachers in 'curriculum making'.

14.55-15.15 - What is sustainable development? Exploring students' understandings of sustainability

Research Paper - KS4

Dr Nicola Walshe, PGCE Geography Assistant Tutor, University of Cambridge

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) became part of the National Curriculum in England in 2000 but its integration into the National Curriculum in schools has varied. The new KS3 National Curriculum that was introduced in 2008 gives geography teachers the opportunity to try out new ways of integrating ESD within the more flexible concept framework; it is anticipated that this may enable students to gain a better understanding of sustainable development. However, how will students' developing understandings be built upon at GCSE? In September 2009 schools started teaching new KS4 specifications and many of the geography specifications have been designed with a much greater emphasis on sustainable development. For example, one of the key aims of the Edexcel B specification is for students to 'recognise how they can contribute to a future that is sustainable and inclusive'. Working with a village college which has selected an examination specification that focuses on sustainability, I wish to explore how teaching this unit of work develops the students' understanding of sustainable development. This session presents early findings from ongoing research working with a small group of Year 10 students.

15.15-15.45 – Group Discussion and Q&A

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16.15-16.35 - An evaluation of the 'Newman/Dudley Gambia' Partnership Project Research Paper - EY-KS2

Dr Des Bowden, Head of Geography and Pam Copeland, Senior Lecturer in Citizenship/Geography, Newman University College

This project is based on a dynamic set of relationships between Newman University College, The Gambia College, Brikama, Dudley primary schools and lower basic and nursery schools in The Gambia. The general aim of the project is to develop sustainable partnerships between these organisations to offer mutual benefits enhancing the education and experience of all concerned. The project is driven by Newman University College geographers and is currently in its third year.

The essence of the project is that a cluster of three Dudley schools (and there are currently three clusters) link with a single Gambian school (either lower basic or a nursery school). Head teachers and international co-ordinators from Dudley have visited the schools on two occasions and more visits are planned. Because the whole project was self-funded it has not yet been possible for Gambian colleagues to visit schools in Dudley. The link is supported by Newman ITE students, who undertake school experiences in both the Dudley school and their link school. The Dudley schools are now in a position to apply for Reciprocal Funding Grants and the International School Partnership Award.

The project and the participants were the subject of an evaluative analysis in the summer of 2009. Successes were noted but these were hard won. One surprising success was the community cohesion benefit that the cluster schools gained by being linked with each other. In the Gambian schools some curriculum development was happening and there was a move away from didactic teaching methods, but hard lessons were learnt about the practicalities and pitfalls of international school partnerships.

16.45-17.05 – The impact of the early stages of the Bujagali Hydropower Dam construction on the River Nile, Jinja, Uganda

Research Paper - KS3-P16

Dr Dina Abbott, Reader in Developmental Geography, University of Derby

One of the most pressing problems for economically poorer countries is that of meeting increasing water and electricity demands created by the need for industrialisation and the domestic requirements of ever-growing populations. Many countries opt for large damming projects to enable them to cope with this demand. However, river damming, particularly in poorer countries which lack basic resources, generates several social and environmental problems.

This case study will draw on recent research carried out in the vicinity of the Bujagali Hydropower Dam, Jinja, Uganda to illustrate some of these problems. It will consider, for example, short-term social consequences of damming such as displacement and loss/reduction in income generation for neighbouring villages and fishermen. It will also look at potentially serious long-term consequences such as ethnic and gender conflict over water resources, diversion of power supply to urban dwellers and businesses and bypassing of poor rural areas that remain without basic electricity.

The environmental costs of damming are also high and examples include effects on water quality, on neighbouring flora and fauna, and fish and animal cyclical migratory patterns. The Bujagali case study will give geography teachers material from a 'live' example to take back to classrooms

17.05-17.35 – Group Discussion and Q&A

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SATURDAY 10 APRIL

11.30-11.50 - Developing a tool to help educators introduce basic mapping concepts in resource poor environments

Research Paper - KS1-2

Dr Jacqueline M. Anderson, Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Planning and Environment, Concordia University, Canada

Maps are a significant tool for visualising, portraying and understanding spatial data crucial for sustainable development - a major issue facing all nations. In the developed world, it has been acknowledged that visual spatial skills need to be nurtured. 2005-2015 has been declared the 'UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development' with the objective of universal primary education by 2015. For the successful comprehension of maps, young children need to understand that a map represents a reality to which they can relate. In environments lacking resources, what locally available materials can be used to foster and develop both educators' and children's understanding and appreciation of the nature of maps (scale reduction, symbolisation, bird's eye view and reference systems)? Could one solution be the development of a resource (currently being called 'Mapping-in-a-Shoe-Box'), which aims to use primarily local resources to sensitise teachers and students to the nature of a map and the role of mapping? Issues associated with the development of such a tool are explored in the context of an integrated interdisciplinary approach to map skills instruction in the area of the Western Cape of South Africa.

12.00-12.20 - Primary children's playground geographies

Research Paper - KS1-2

Professor Simon Catling, Research Leader, Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Oxford Brookes University

Primary school playgrounds are a key aspect of younger children's personal geographies. They spend significant time during the school day in the playground, providing them with a variety of experiences and opportunities. These encompass enjoyments and concerns, from the pleasures of meeting and chatting with friends and playing games to problems of aggression and bullying and of time spent in solitude with little to do. Playground spaces can be arid, uniform environments or places of varied 'landscapes' giving children different options for spending their playtimes. This paper considers some of the possibilities and issues associated with children's time in playgrounds, related in particular to playgrounds as places and experiential environments. It notes that there has been limited research on the place-based and geographical experiences of younger children in school playgrounds, and considers how children might become involved in researching their own and their peers' playground geographies.

12.20-12.50 – Group Discussion and Q&A

13.50-14.10 - iGuess: Integrating GIS Use in Education in Several Subjects

Research Paper - KS3-P16

Luc Zwartjes, Teacher of Geography, Sint-Lodewijkcollege, Brugge, Belgium

Many people use GIS applications such as car navigation systems and interactive online maps every day, yet the iGuess (Integrating GIS Use in Education in Several Subjects) consortium believes that GIS learning in Europe is lagging behind the rest of the world. They suggest that progress could be made if we initiate continent-wide education programmes, following the example of the USA. According to iGuess, if teachers are more aware of the advantages of GIS, it will give them opportunities for working on interdisciplinary, cross-curricular, or even European projects.

The iGuess project has produced:

- A report on the state of GIS in secondary education across Europe
- A report on opportunities for using GIS in a variety of subjects

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- A searchable database of lessons

The iGuess consortium is developing a GIS training course for teachers – further information will be available during the session.

14.20-14.40 - Bridging the gap: ICT in the daily life of youngsters outside and inside the classroom

Research Paper - KS3-P16

Dr Daniela Schmeinck, Lecturer in Science Education, Institute of Natural Sciences, University of Education Karlsruhe, Germany

ICT is becoming more and more common both inside the classroom and in the everyday lives of students. Nevertheless, a gap still exists between young people's everyday experiences of ICT outside and inside the classroom. This causes many students to see ICT purely as a tool for entertainment in their private lives rather than a learning or working tool. Many applications and tools used by young people can be introduced within educational contexts and thereby offer extra opportunities for different ways of learning and teaching. Additionally, the implementation of such tools can narrow a perceived gap between everyday realities of young people and specifically within their formal education. This presentation will show the results of an empirical study of the use of ICT-tools in classrooms and in the everyday lives of students. Through examples, the presentation will propose possible methodologies, guidelines and exercises for using ICT in classroom practice.

14.55-15.15 - Collaborative digital mapping in KS2

Research Paper - KS2

David Owen, Primary and Early Years Programme Leader, Sheffield Hallam University

Interactive electronic mapping applications give primary children the opportunity to act as creative cartographers and to collaborate in the construction of digital maps. Children aged between seven and ten years old have used one such mapping application as part of geographical learning in a UK primary school. But do these applications, and the ways in which teachers and children use them, really add to the map making capabilities of the pupils? This paper presents results from research in this developing area, and will discuss the children's experiences of collaborative digital mapping. The presentation will explain how the children represented particular features of their local area on a large scale map, and then examine the role of the cartographic tools used to support the children. It concludes by assessing the role of children's talk in the mapping process, and outlines the implications for teaching and curriculum development.

15.15-15.45 – Group Discussion and Q&A
